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HESIOD'S DESCRIPTION OF WINTER

(*Works and Days*, lines 493-560)

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All those who have read Hesiod's *Works and Days* know that the charm of the short poem resides mainly in a few delightful episodes and descriptions interrupting the long series of exhortations to the frivolous Perses. One of those digressions is the description of winter (ll. 493-560). It is picturesque, full of striking comparisons, and leaves a strong impression. Unfortunately for the glory of the Boeotian sage, this piece of masterly work is precisely one of which the authenticity has been most generally contested. Twosten, Lehrs, Goettling, Schoemann, Fick, Paley, all reject the passage. Sittl, Flach, and Rzach accept it, while Waltz proposes to preserve a few portions of it. The able author of the last English translation of the Hesiodic poems, Mr. H. G. Evelyn-White, has recently placed himself among those who do not concede to Hesiod the paternity of the description (*Classical Review*, XXX, 209). According to his theory, only a few lines of the introductory passage (ll. 493-503) are genuine and should be considered as the prototype of later amplifications. The words:

ὥρη χειμερῆ, ὁπότε κρύος ἀνέρα ἔργων
ισχάνει, . . . (ll. 494-95)

have suggested to a versifier of the Boeotian school the idea of introducing here a more vivid evocation of the winter season and of taking advantage of such a splendid opportunity, so surprisingly

missed by Hesiod (ll. 524–35). A poet of the Ionian school, unsatisfied with the Boeotian picture, rewrote it to suit the taste of his own school. The tradition preserved both compositions, the Ionian *rifacimento* being intercalated between Hesiod's short mention and its later amplification, occupying thus ll. 504–23. In this way the conceits *ἀνόστειος* (*octopus*), *ὕλη κοῖται* (*ferae*), *τρίπους* (*senex*), supposedly typical of the Hesiodic art, though they would be denied to Hesiod himself, would be preserved by his school, while the Ionian features of a part of the description would also be accounted for.

It remains an injustice, however, to deprive Hesiod of the paternity of the description, unless cogent reasons are adduced to show its spuriousness; and, I am sorry to say, the close examination to which I subjected Hesiod's text while conducting the exercises of the Greek seminar in the University of Pennsylvania in 1916–17 has brought me to conclusions very different from those of Mr. Evelyn-White and of most of the commentators. In the consideration of that old problem I have tried to resort as much as possible to fresh evidence.

The main positive reason why the text should be rejected is, of course, its alleged Ionian appearance. "Both in tone and in color," says Mr. Evelyn-White, "ll. 504–23 stand out strongly from the background of the main part of the *Works and Days*."

Before proceeding any farther, one may wonder whether this fact, if it were actually established, should deter us from regarding the passage as authentic. The indebtedness of Hesiod to the Homeric and to the older Ionian school of poetry is known to be very great. The Boeotian moralist, though he puts himself in opposition to the levity of the Ionian works of fiction, has conceived the idea of his poem under their influence and has adopted their dialect and their terminology. For Hesiod, poetry means Homeric or Ionian poetry. Whenever he wishes to write real poetry, he adopts an Ionian tone, as is, for instance, so conspicuous in the prologue to the *Theogony*. His task is to make out of popular, moralizing, Boeotian poetry a real poem recalling Homeric poems, but with another spirit and another purpose. A close examination of Hesiod's poetical style reveals in the didactic portions an overwhelming abundance of alliterations, rhymes, and repetitions of words, all of which are processes of

a mnemonic character found in the proverbs of all nations, and which he raised to the dignity of poetical features. In the descriptive episodes, as, for instance, the picture of the ages of the world, though they are not absent they are much more moderately used, because there he means to write, not exhortations, but what in his mind is real poetry, and he shows that, if needed, he can be a good practicer of the traditional poetical art.

A few Ionisms would thus hardly go beyond showing that in these passages Hesiod had Ionian verses in his memory. Mr. Evelyn-White thinks that he has made clear that the short description of the maiden, restful at home, while the cold wind is blowing out of doors:

καὶ διὰ παρθενικῆς ἀπαλόχροος οὐ διάσιν
ἦτε δόμων ἔντοσθε φίλῃ παρὰ μητέρι μίμνει
οὐπω ἔργα ἰδυῖα πολυχρύσου Ἀφροδίτης.

is a reproduction of ll. 1-32 of the Homeric hymn to Aphrodite.

In fact, the resemblances are only what one expects them to be in that type of poetry which works so extensively with common-places and with set epithets.

There is in both works an allusion to a girl who has not yet conceived any desire for the ἔργα Ἀφροδίτης. It takes three lines in Hesiod, while it is a long development in the hymn. Considering the great popularity of Hesiod's poems, there is, therefore, much more probability that his verses and expressions were obsessing the memory of the composer of Aphrodite's hymn. παρθενικὴ ἀπαλόχροος is found in both passages, it is true, but it is obviously a set expression and Hesiod has ἀπαλός in *Theog.* 3, while παρθενική, which is found in *Op.* 63, is a Homeric word, no more surprising in Hesiod than in the hymns.

The same argument applies to πολυχρύσος Ἀφροδίτη, for which Hesiod also says χρυσήν Ἀφροδίτη (*Op.* 65). Here, again, there is no reason to believe in any indebtedness to the hymn. Hesiod, curiously enough, does not mention Ἔρος or Ἀφροδίτη without accompanying them with graceful and erotic expressions as is the case, e.g., in the episode of Pandora (*Op.* 65 f.):

καὶ χάριν ἀμφιχέαι κεφαλῇ χρυσήν Ἀφροδίτην
καὶ πόθον ἀργαλέον καὶ γυιοκόρους μελεδώνας

or in the *Theogony*, when amidst the horror of the cosmogonic myths, he indulges in saying (ll. 120-22):

ἦδ' Ἔρος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι
 λυσιμμελής, πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ' ἀνθρώπων
 δάμναται ἐν στήθεσσι νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν

while in connection with Aphrodite's myth he makes a long description of the pleasures of love (ll. 200-206). The ideas and the expressions are strikingly similar to several of those in the prologue of Aphrodite's hymn (*ἐδαμάσσατο* [l. 3], *φιλομμειδής* [l. 17], [cf. *Theog.* 205, 989], *ἡμερον* [l. 2], [cf. *Theog.* 201], etc.). Has anyone, however, ever thought that on all those passages the Ionian influence of Aphrodite's hymn has been active?

One sees, also, how dangerous it would be to point to a certain weakness or softness discoverable in the description of the maiden taking some care of her body at home, and to infer from it that one is confronted here with a sample of Ionian customs. The emphasis on the girl's delicate skin (*λοεσσαμένη τέρενα χροά* . . . [l. 522]) is fully justified by the context. The entire preceding passage was describing the effect of a bitterly cold wind upon the skins of various animals. It can pierce the hides of the wild animals and of the cows. What then of the delicate skin of a maiden, unless she wisely stays at home by the hearth? This short picture of the girl provides, moreover, a very natural transition between the description of the effects of wind on the skin and that of the plight of all beings in cold weather. The girl at home escapes the torments both of wind and of cold. She lacks the thick protecting hide of the cows and the deer, but she is not frozen in a fireless house as is the octopus. Then, very naturally, comes the description of the sufferings of "the horned and unhorned denizens of the wood, with teeth chattering pitifully," etc.

But the editors of Hesiod claim to have found in the passage words that are unmistakably Ionian. There is notably the name of the month *Ἀηραιῶνα*. The same month in Delphi, so it is said (*Cosm. Indic.* 1702), was called *βουκάριος*, "killer of oxen," but Hesiod does not write in Boeotian nor in Phocian. His verses are in the language of the Homerides, and it is not at all unlikely that in writing his description of winter Hesiod was under the influence of similar

descriptions made in Ionia, in which *Ληναίων* had become a synonym of winter, as in French, *l'aout* is a synonym of "the harvest." Now it is very remarkable that *μῆνα δὲ Ληναίων* is explained in Hesiod's verse by *βουδόρα πάντα*. It seems that the name of the month in his own dialect was present in his mind while he was using *Ληναίων*, so that *βουδόρα* appears there as a commentary for the use of the Boeotian peasants' "The month of Lenaeon which, as we say, skins [or kills] the oxen." A compromise of that kind is exactly what a man is expected to make when he is using a literary language to speak to people whom he regularly addresses in a local dialect.

More serious, at first sight, is the objection derived from the presence of *Πανελλήνεσσι* in l. 528:

ἥλιος βράδιον δὲ Πανελλήνεσσι φαίνει.

It is alleged that the designation of the Greek world by such a general expression is surprising in Hesiod's time. Now, I think the difficulty arises from a false interpretation of the word. *Πανέλληνες* is an old expression. One has it in *Il.* 2. 530.¹

[*Αἴας*] *ἐγχείη δ' ἐκέαστο Πανέλληνας καὶ Ἀχαιοὺς.*

A comparison with *Il.* 2. 683 sq. in the same book:

*Οἳ τ' εἶχον Φθίην ἥδ' Ἑλλάδα καλλιγύναικα
Μυρμιδόνες δὲ καλεῖντο καὶ Ἑλλήνες καὶ Ἀχαιοί,*

shows that what is meant by *Πανέλληνας* is a group of Thessalian Greeks.

The expression does not seem to have had a long life. It is still found in Archilochus frag. 47 in the eighth century. Later it changed its original meaning. There is every reason to believe that in Hesiod's line it refers to Northern Greece. This interpretation gives a very good meaning, indeed. It introduces a clear contrast between the South, the land of the *κυανέων ἀνδρῶν*, and the North, the land of the Thessalians, where in winter the sun especially *βράδιον φαίνει*.

Finally, a proof of spuriousness is found in the abnormal repetition of a negation in:

*πῶεα δ' οὐ τι
οὔνεκ' ἐπεηταναὶ τρίχες αὐτῶν, οὐ διάησιν* [*Il.* 516-17],

¹ The passage has been held to be spurious, but without any other reason than the very reluctance to accept *Πανέλληνας* as a possible old form.

but this is obviously due to the long distance between verb and subject. The repetition of *οὐ* before *διάησιν* provides a useful parallelism with the ending of l. 515: *οὐδέ μιν ἴσχει*, and of l. 519: *οὐ διάησιν*.

I therefore conclude that neither the tone nor the words of the description of winter oblige us to believe that it is post-Hesiodic. Its relative independence in the poem is no surer mark of its spuriousness. One should not lose sight of the exigencies of the genre to which Hesiod has devoted himself. Didactic poetry is almost a contradiction in terms. Poetry is the product of imagination. Didactic literature appeals to reason. In that type of poems, therefore, the tendency is in all times to regard versification as an ornament of reason. It is a device to render teaching more attractive; hence, a propensity to refinement and niceties in the structure of the verse or in the expressions. That display of ability replaces the inspiration, which necessarily is commonplace, since moral truths are universal. One knows how far such tendencies were pushed in the mediaeval *Chambres de Rhétorique*. Those features, as we will emphasize later, are far from absent in Hesiod's versification.

Moreover, the necessity of speaking to our imagination as well as to our reason in order to make the teaching attractive and somewhat poetical almost invariably results in the introduction of allegories and parables. This device is essentially human and inherited from the folklore. It is constantly used in the *Roman de la Rose* and other works of the same period in the Middle Ages. It is no less conspicuous in the *Works and Days* (allegory of the two *ἔπιδες*, fable of the eagle and the nightingale, tales of Pandora and of the ages of the world, etc.).

Irrespective of the moral value of such episodes, they have a great literary importance. Hesiod has undertaken to adapt the Homeric poetry of imagination to truth. He conceived the idea of a poem on work and of another one on the origins of gods and the world (if one accepts the tradition which ascribes the *Theogony* to the same poet as the *Works and Days*). He soon felt that his matter was dry and monotonous, and he resorted, therefore, very naturally to the introduction of episodes, not only allegorical but descriptive and narrative as, e.g., the chorus of the Muses or the fight against the Titans in the *Theogony*.

The description of winter provides a badly needed interruption in the long enumeration of the farmer's occupations all through the year. In spite of much humor, spirit, and variety in the expressions, the second part of the poem would have been too uniform an address without that single lengthy description. The very reason, therefore, why at first sight the passage might seem to be interpolated, if considered in connection with the exigencies of this special type of poetry, becomes a proof of its authenticity.

This shows, of course, how dangerous it is to apply indiscriminately general standards to some literary work instead of basing one's argument on the special features of the peculiar genre or of the individual writer. This fault unfortunately has been only too often committed by the immense majority of the critics and commentators of classical works.

Another instance of it is the argument based on repetitions of words and expressions in the passage. In later works this might point to *remaniements*. In Hesiod, on the contrary, this is the very thing expected. We try to avoid repeating the same words or the same ideas in our works. For the early Greek poets or prose writers, as Hesiod and Herodotus, the repetition of the same words was a device to emphasize the symmetry of the style or the structure of the argument. This is especially observable in Hesiod's prologue to the *Works and Days*, where it has an antithetic character (cf. ll. 1-10, 20-26, etc.). Generally, it is emphatic (ll. 80-82, 150-51, and especially in ll. 295-319) for *ἐργον*, *ἄεργος*, *ἐργάζω*, etc.

A somewhat attentive reading of the text will reveal such repetitions all through the poem. Their use to accentuate a parallelism is especially apparent in the "Ages of the World"; cf. the repetition there of *γένος*, *μέροπες ἄνθρωποι*, *ἔσθλός, κατὰ γαῖα ἐκαλυψεν, μάκαρες θεοί, ὀλυμπία δῶματ' ἔχοντες*, etc. Every new race of men is introduced practically with the same formula. Mr. Evelyn-White is shocked by the reproduction in ll. 525-35 of at least two features of the first picture (ll. 503-20): the bowed appearance of the aged and the mention of the *βῆσσαι*, "woody glens." But in the first case the aged man is actually represented as suffering from the *wind* (*τροχαλὸν δὲ γέροντα τίθησιν*), while in the second case it is a mere comparison—the cold bows down the wild animals as the wind does the aged.

In the first section the wind bends the proud oaks and pines in the mountain glens; in the second, the *cold* affects the inhabitants of the same glens. The effects of the wind (in which the idea of *skin* predominates) and those of the cold (in which the *home* is the important feature) are thus treated as two sides of a diptych painting, and the poet very pertinently tries to emphasize the parallelism by recalling in the second section expressions of the first. The symmetry between the comparison of the girl at home and of the octopus in its hole enhances the same parallelism in a striking manner, so that it would be irrational to cut off the first without suppressing the second in which Mr. Evelyn-White finds Hesiodic traits. The only reasonable policy is, therefore, to preserve both, the more so since, as said before, they provide the natural transition between the two symmetrical descriptions.

That double picture is followed by practical conclusions: against wind, have good clothes to protect the skin; against cold, give good food to men and beasts and wear thick garments. Another caution is to avoid getting wet, which introduces the idea of rain as another aspect of winter, and the third section of what is a triptych rather than a diptych. That conclusions are interwoven with that third part of the description is perhaps a literary weakness, but it is quite typically Hesiodic. One has a very striking instance of it in ll. 225-37, in which the description of the good effects of the righteousness of the βασιλεῖς degenerates into a general picture of prosperity, extending even as far as the production of acorns by oaks. On the other hand, the reproduction of a preceding development with only a slight change in the subject—as is the case here for wind, cold, rain—is also very Hesiodic. Among the considerations concerning Justice, one finds, e.g., in ll. 220-24 that Justice complains aloud when it is wronged, while in ll. 256-62 the same Justice with as much emphasis accuses the unjust βασιλεῖς at the throne of Zeus. In ll. 237-47 the injustice of one man is represented as bringing a punishment upon the whole city. Lines 248 ff. describe how a punishment is inflicted upon the unrighteous princes, while the conclusion of the whole passage, in ll. 282-84, again announces a punishment; and when Hesiod, after the general preaching, begins to give private and intimate advices to his brother, in a more familiar tone,

he enlarges again on a very similar idea, but in a more personal manner: Your bad conduct will bring misfortune upon you. There is a great similarity, also, between the description of prosperity procured by Justice (ll. 225-63) and the demonstration that the respect of divine law alone gives desirable riches (ll. 320-41).

If, therefore, on such grounds one rejects the description of winter or portions of it, one must also hold in suspicion two-thirds of the poem. However, the exclusion of all the passages that seem more or less similar to preceding ones could be made only arbitrarily because the same Hesiodic features are found in them all, and even the sequence of ideas is easily discovered in the whole poem, provided one remembers that, although it is a poem of reason, it aims, as does popular oratory, to impress an idea *par coups répétés*, by reproducing the same considerations in another tone or under another slightly different aspect, so as to create a state of mind, rather than by a persuasion based on a strict argument.

Even this broad view of the poem, however, cannot stand in the presence of contradictions, and Mr. Evelyn-White thinks that he has found two in the description of winter. He is shocked by the fact that the daughter of a farmer is lying down in daytime (*καταλέγεται ἐνδοθι οἴκου ἡματι χειμερίῳ*), but *ἡμαρ* of course has a very broad meaning with poets. It is used for destiny: *ὀλέθριον ἡμαρ, νηλεὲς ἡμαρ*; and in the *Iliad* the very expression *ἡματι χειμερίῳ* is used in 12. 279 as an equivalent of "in winter," as *ἡματι ὀπωρινῷ* in *Il.* 16. 385 means "in late summer." There are popular tales in France beginning on "*Un jour, c'était pendant la nuit . . .*" More subtle is the second objection of this kind (l. 494): Hesiod advises Perses to shun the *λέσχαι* where time is wasted and to stay at home in winter. In ll. 535 ff. he indicates various cautions to be taken by a man who, in winter, goes to work out of doors. I confess that I am not struck by any contradiction here. The bits of advice are given in very different connections. It is better to stay at home than to lounge as a loafer in public houses, but, if one has to go out in winter for some serious purpose, one should wear a thick coat. Idle talk in *λέσχαι* is to be avoided, but idle rest at home when there is work out of doors would not be advisable either. We never are more consistent in our talks, let alone in our preachings.

There are, on the other hand, positive reasons for believing in the Hesiodic character of the whole description. There is, e.g., in l. 575 of the *Works and Days* the expression, ὥρη ἐν ἀμῆτου, ὅτε τ' ἥλιος χροά κάρφει, which makes a perfect parallelism with μῆνα δὲ Ἀθηναίωνα, κακ' ἡματα, βούδορα πάντα, and the following account of the action of the cold wind on the skin—i.e., precisely the portion of the description of winter which is most strongly suspected to be Ionian. Moreover, the prologue of Aphrodite's hymn contains hardly any alliteration of a striking character. It has no more rhyming words or repetitions of words than any Greek epic passage. The description of winter, on the contrary, in its entirety abounds in such devices. Although casually Hellenists have noted the mere existence of alliterations in Hesiod, the attention of the philologists has never been seriously attracted by this striking peculiarity of his style.

Obviously, in Greek proverbs, as in those of all peoples, those mnemonic processes were in current use. Only Hesiod, who found them in the popular poetry, has consciously used them as an element of poetical style. The ten verses of his prologue to the *Works and Days* contain more than twelve sure instances of those repetitions of sounds, and a somewhat attentive reading of the whole poem will reveal them by hundreds. They are so clear, so numerous, that even the most skeptical observer would exclude the possibility of a mere coincidence.

In the description of winter remarkable alliterations are found, e.g., in:

L. 497 (π): συν πενίη, λεπτή, δὲ παχὺν πόδα χειρὶ πιάζεις πολλὰ. . . .

Ll. 509-11 (π): πολλὰ δὲ δρυὺς ὑψικόμους ἐλάτας τε παχείας
οὔρεος ἐν βήσσης πιλνῶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ
ἐμπύπτων, καὶ πᾶσα βοῶ τότε νήριτος ὕλη.

L. 522 (λ): εὖ τε λοεσσαμένη τέρενα χροά καὶ λίπ' ἐλαίω.

Ll. 523-24 (χ-μ): χρισμένη μυχή καταλέξεται ἔνδοθι οἴκου
ἡματι χειμερίῳ

Ll. 535-36 (κ and χ): . . . ἔρυμα χροός, ὥς σε κελεύω,
χλαῖνάν τε μαλακὴν καὶ θερμίοεντα χιτῶνα.¹

¹ The *aspiratae* and the *tenues* constantly alliterate together in Hesiod's verses, as shown, e.g., in ll. 25-26 (πτ:φθ):

καὶ κεραμεὺς κεραμεῖ κοτέει καὶ τέκτονι τέκτων
καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῷ φθονέει καὶ αἰοῖδς αἰοῖδῳ.

L. 533 (τρ): καὶ γλάφυ πετρῆεν· τότε δὲ τρίποδι βρωτῷ ἴσοι.

Ll. 541-43 (π-φ):

ἀμφὶ δὲ ποσσὶ πέδιλα βοὸς ἱφι κταμένοιο
 ἄρμενα δῆσασθαι, πίλοις ἔντοσθε πυκάσσας
 πρωτογόνων δ' ἐρίφων, ὁπότ' ἄν. . . .

Ll. 551-58 (χ): . . . μείς γὰρ χαλεπώτατος οὔτος
 χαιμέριος, χαλεπὸς προβάτοις, χαλεπὸς δ' ἀνθρώποις.

Internal alliterations are no less common:

Ll. 555-58 (αλ): . . . ἀμφικαλύψῃ
 χρῶτα δὲ μυδαλέον θήῃ κατὰ θ' εἴματα δέυσῃ
 ἄλλ' ὑπαλείασθαι· μείς γὰρ χαλεπώτατος οὔτος, etc.

Ll. 548-49 (ερ-ορ): . . . ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἀστεροέντος
 ἀῖρ πυροφόρος τέταται μακάρων ἐπὶ ἔργοις.

Ll. 529-30 (υλ-λυ): . . . ὑλικοῖται
 λυγρὸν μυλιώντες.

In a few verses there seems to exist an alliteration of *digammas*:

Ll. 525-26: ἐν τ' ἀπόρῃ φοῖκῃ καὶ φήθεσι λευγαλείοισιν
 οὐδέ φοι ἤφελιος.

L. 521: οὐ πω φέργα φιδνῖα πολυχρύσου Ἀφροδίτης.

Curiously enough, it is not rare to find a word in the midst of a verse alliterating with a word at the same place in the following line:

Ll. 517-18: οὐνεκ' ἐπηγεταναὶ τρίχες αὐτῶν, οὐ διάησιν
 ἴς ἀνέμου Βορέου¹· τροχαλὸν δὲ γέροντα τίθησιν.

L. 521: οὐπὼ ἔργα ἰδνῖα πολυχρύσου Ἀφροδίτης
 εὐ τε λοεσσαμένη τέρενα χροά καὶ λίπ' ἐλαίφ.²

Besides those very clear cases of alliterations of various sorts, there are a great many alliterations of a less striking type, which, however, can hardly have been unintentional, as, e.g., in ll. 493 (χ, κ), 494 (ερ), 497 (π), 500 (κ), 502 (δ), 505 (πηγ-πιγ), 507 (τρ), 512 (ρ), 514 (δ), 516 (α), 520 (μ), 521 (φ), 522 (λ), 528 (παν), 531 (φ-π), 533 (κ-χ), 535 (λεν), 547 (π), 548 (α), 557 (λ), etc.

¹ The original text probably had Βορέω for Βορέω.

² In the same kind are, e.g., ll. 145-46:

ἐκ μελιᾶν, δεινὸν τε καὶ ὄβριμον· οἷσιν Ἀρῆος
 ἔρν ἔμελεν στονόεντα καὶ ὕβριες· οὐδέτι σίτον.

This will suffice to demonstrate that not only is there no stringent motive to regard the description of winter as a late interpolation in the *Works and Days*, but that there is every reason to consider it as a decidedly Hesiodic composition. Far from being a *hors-d'œuvre*, it is an almost necessary part of the poem. Its apparent repetitions or so-called inconsistencies are in reality typical features of Hesiod's manner. Moreover, the consideration of the very curious and typical forms of Hesiod's style gives us a new and valuable criterion for distinguishing Hesiodic verses from other poetry. I hope that its application to this old problem may have helped to solve it.

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